



Kathleen Emerson-Dell Appointed Assistant Curator

Kathleen Emerson-Dell (“Ked”) is the new Assistant Curator for the Art and Book Collections at the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum.

Ked has a rich background in Japanese arts and culture. After completing her Bachelor of Arts degree in Art History at the University of Maryland, she attended the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor and received a Masters Degree in Japanese Art History and completed doctoral course work in Asian Art History. She was the recipient of a Freer Fellowship at the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. for the study of Japanese ceramics, as well as a Japan Foundation Fellowship for advanced Japanese language studies in Tokyo, Japan.

Before coming to the Museum, she worked for 16 years at the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, Maryland. As the Japanese specialist at that institution, she cata-



Kathleen Emerson-Dell, is the Assistant Curator for Art and Book Collections.

logued the Japanese collections of paintings, prints, sculpture, metalwork, swords, lacquers, ceramics, armor and *netsuke*. She was also responsible for the installation of the Walters’ collection of Asian art in the Hackerman House, an 1850’s property annexed to that museum.

She has published articles on Japanese tapestry and pottery making, and is the author of the Walters exhibit catalogue, *Bridging*

East and West: Japanese Ceramics from the Kozan Studio. In addition, Ked has lectured on a wide range of Asian topics, including the history of the Japanese kimono, kabuki actor prints and Meiji period decorative arts.

In her new position at the Museum, she will curate the collections of viewing stones and scholars rocks and the scroll, ceramic, and book collections. She will also have oversight of

exhibits in the Mary Mrose International Pavilion and will assist with the care of the tree collections.

Ked has studied and taught the art of bonsai in the context of Japanese art. She has bonsai at her home in Reston, Virginia, which she shares with her husband, John, and their nine-year-old twins, Nora and Paul.

Photo: Mary Byrne





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President's Letter



In the spring of 2005, NBF and allied bonsai organizations in the United States were totally absorbed in the final preparations for the 5th World Bonsai Convention here in Washington D.C. Indeed, for four long years we had been preparing for that four-day event. Suddenly it was upon us, and we were caught up in the whirl of convention activities. Then, just as quickly, it was behind us and part of bonsai history.

Just after the convention ended, our attention turned to assembling and producing the 5th WBC Commemorative Album. This gave us an opportunity to really see what had been accomplished and how this event, preceded by those in Tokyo, Orlando, Seoul and Munich, and to be succeeded by the next one in San Juan in 2009, is a key building block of the world bonsai community.

For all of those who worked so hard on the 5th WBC, that exhaustive effort has been replaced by a quiet pride that, through the cooperative goodwill and dedication of so many, we did bring the bonsai world together for a brief but glorious moment. For the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum, the 5th WBC allowed the world bonsai community to see first-hand that this is the finest museum of its kind in the world.

Last July, just when we thought things were getting back to normal, **Jack Sustic** announced his retirement as Curator of the Museum. He had been Curator for three years, and also served as the good and able Co-Chair, along with **Glenn Reusch**, of the 5th WBC. We thank Jack for his many contributions.

By the end of 2005, the Museum had a new Curator: **Jim Hughes**, who trained and worked with **Bob Drechsler**, **Warren Hill** and **Jack Sustic**. Jim brings to the task many skills imparted to him by his distinguished predecessors, and his artistry and horticultural knowledge will bring out the very best in the Museum's collections, as the trees continue to mature and change over time. We also welcomed **Kathleen Emerson-Dell** to the Museum as a new Assistant Curator. She brings many talents that will transform the art and book collections of the Museum.

In February of this year, we were deeply saddened by the death of our dear friend and colleague **Jack Billet**. Jack brought to the NBF board both wisdom and a sense of humor; in his work and teaching, he embodied the noble ideal of promoting friendship and goodwill in the world through bonsai. We will miss his presence at the NBF board table.

As we now enter the summer of 2006—the 30th anniversary of the Museum—we look forward to the further development of an institution that brings beauty into the lives of all who visit it.

Felix

Jack Billet

The bonsai community lost a wonderful friend in February with the death of Jack Billet, age 71, of Wilmington, Delaware.

Jack was an esteemed member of the NBF Board of Directors for many years and, along with **Doris Froning**, conceived the concept of the NBF publication, *John Naka's Sketchbook* (2005). In 2004 the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum hosted an exhibit of *shohin* and *mame* bonsai from the collections of Jack and Dorie.

He was a well recognized and beloved bonsai teacher who generously imparted his appreciation and understanding of bonsai to students all over the East Coast. NBF was designated as a beneficiary of memorial donations in his honor, and we have received numerous letters of warm tribute from those who knew him.



Jack Billet with his shohin at the 2004 Exhibit in the Museum.

He is survived by his wife Barbara, a son Bradford and a grandson Matthew.

As **Vaughn Banting** said: "Jack always had a mischievous twinkle in his eye and it always felt good to be around him. I know so many of us in the bonsai community will miss him greatly." We will indeed.

Curator's Corner

By James Hughes

Besides the fact that March 21 is my birthday, the first day of spring is always one of my favorite days, especially working here at the Museum. The trees are coming out of winter storage and it is the season for repotting. The wire applied last fall is coming off many of the branches and the expectation of another year of growth is in the air.

This spring was particularly rewarding since we released two *Pinus parviflora* that had been in quarantine since their arrival from Japan in 2004. The largest tree is a slant style and measures 12 inches in diameter at the base. The other, *Pinus parviflora* 'Zuisyo' has extremely small needles and is a formal upright. These two bonsai are gifts from **Mr. and Mrs. Daizo Iwasaki** and are priceless additions to our Japanese Collection.

For the past ten months, with the departure of **Jack Sustic** and **Michael James**, we have been sorely understaffed in the Museum. We are fortunate though that **Christy Hilberg**, the Museum gardener, took on many added responsibilities, and with the help of **Carole Bordelon** and others from the Gardens Unit, we were able to safely shepherd the Tree Collections through the winter months.

Then, with the coming of spring, we were very pleased to welcome **Kathleen Emerson-Dell** to our Museum team.



Jim Hughes teaching in the Melba Tucker Arbor at one of the bonsai demonstration this spring.

Kathleen, or Ked as she prefers to be called, is a very talented museum specialist who comes to us after many years at the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore. With this museum background, combined with fluency in the Japanese language and graduate studies in Japanese Art History, we have high expectations for her work with the art and book collections.

By the time this publication reaches you, interviews for the second assistant curator, who will help care for the trees, should be finished. Then our work force will be complete. So how can I not help but be optimistic and energetic? It is summer, the trees are out of hibernation, help abounds, and the Museum is filled with visitors.

NBF Board of Directors

❖ **Julian Adams, Carl Morimoto** and **Wayne Schoech** were elected to the NBF Board of Directors for three-year terms effective May 19th.

Julian Adams, of Lynchburg, Virginia, has been involved in bonsai since 1971 and is the proprietor of *Adams Bonsai*. He has written many articles on bonsai for local and national publications, as well as lecturing and conducting workshops and demonstrations.

Wayne Schoech, of *Stone Lantern Discoveries* in Passumpsic Vermont,

is the publisher of the periodical *Bonsai Today*. He has studied bonsai since 1978 and was a partner with Hitoshi Kanegae at *New England Bonsai Gardens*.

Carl Morimoto lives in San Jose, California and became involved in bonsai in 1989. With fluency in the Japanese language, he translates Japanese publications on bonsai into English, making them available to an American audience. He has been the editor of *Golden Statements* since 2000.

❖ **Cynthia Helms** and **Helen Souder** concluded their terms on the board on May 19th. While on the board, Mrs. Helms was extraordinarily instrumental in helping NBF to prepare and host the 5th World Bonsai Convention. She also facilitated cooperation between the Sackler/Freer Gallery of Art and the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum. Mrs. Souder was an active board member for numerous terms and gave generously in many different ways to support the Museum throughout her long and distinguished bonsai career.

Volunteer of Merit

By Christina Hilberg

At the 2005 Annual Museum Holiday party the staff of the Bonsai & Penjing Museum gave the Volunteer of Merit Award* to **Richard Winchester** who assists the staff in maintaining the gardens of the Museum complex.

When I first came to the Museum as the Gardener, I did not have very much experience working in Japanese gardens. So Richard took the time to teach me the finer points of Japanese gardening techniques, especially pruning. He also instructed me about the garden's past and how to plan for the future as the plants grow. As gardeners have changed over the years, Richard remains as a stable presence in the garden and his work provides continuity in the art of styling the plants.

Richard routinely prunes the maples, does "gentle shearing" on the azaleas and hollies in the **Kato Family Japanese Stroll Garden**, helps to candle the pines in the spring, as well as planting and weeding. In addition, he has worked on many special projects, including rebuilding the deteriorating stone work in the Japanese Stroll Garden and designing and constructing the bamboo fencing for the walkway in the Cryptomeria Walk.

Not only is Richard a dependable and an industrious volunteer, but it is a plea-



Photo: Christina Hilberg

Richard Winchester pruning in the Japanese Stroll Garden.

sure for me to work with him. His capacity for taking on apparently endless tasks is amazing to me. He can hand saw for hours, shovel wet mud for what seems like days, and still have a smile and ask: "What's next?"

Although he is "retired", Richard is far from inactive. He does aesthetic pruning for clients, and has been apparently rebuilding his home while caring for his own beautiful Japanese garden. I am just grateful that he makes time to come to the Museum and work with us.

We are very fortunate to have Richard as a volunteer and a friend of the Museum.

**Over the last few years at the Annual Holiday Party, the Museum staff has given special recognition to a volunteer. Volunteers who have previously been recognized are: Janet Lanman (2002), David Garvin (2003) and John Cardon (2004).*

Museum Notes

❖ **Carole Bordelon**, who was the Museum Gardener from 1990–1994, and Asian Collections Curator from 1997 until 2005, has been appointed the Supervisory Horticulturist for the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum.

❖ This spring two imposing bamboo shoot stones were installed in a garden bed adjacent to the **Yuji Yoshimura Center**. The stones were donated by **Daniel Bui** and **Nhan**



Bamboo Shoot Stones.

Photo: Kathleen Emerson-Dell

Truong of the Potomac Viewing Stone Group.

❖ On February 4th **Rob Naka**, grandson of **John Y. Naka**, and his wife **Lori** and daughter **Kyrsten Naka**, visited the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum. Pictured here with **Goshin** and his wife and daughter, Rob recalled Easter Egg Hunts when his grandfather would hide the eggs in this famous forest planting.



Naka family with Goshin.

Photo: Christina Hilberg



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❖ The annual *Sakura Matsuri* of Washington D.C. was celebrated over a two-week span in March and early April. Museum Curator, **James Hughes** and NBF Executive Director, **Johann Klodzen**, represented the Museum at the opening-day event for families on March 25th at the National Building Museum. Museum volunteers **Jack Cardon**, **Jim Rieden** and Arboretum staff members **Keenan Amundsen**, **Susan Burgess**, **Rose Ann Davis**, **Robin Everly**, **Hongmei Ma** and **Jeffrey Rex** participated in the Street Fair that closed the festival on April 8th.



Sakura Matsuri

Photo: James Hughes

❖ A Silent Auction of trees and pots that were not in the accessioned collections was held in the Courtyard of the Museum on June 3rd. The event garnered almost \$6,000 in sales, and the funds will be used for Museum-related expenses.